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Larry Wright to: Blake Atkins, Philip Dellinger, Ray Leissner, Jose Torres

02/05/2007 03:03 PM

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To: Blake Atkins/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Philip Dellinger/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Ray Leissner/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Jose Torres/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

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02/05/2007 11:18 AM

To Blake Atkins/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Larry Wright/R6/USEPA/US@EPA
cc

Subject News: Goliad wells show high levels of radon, radium, Victoria Advocate, 02/04/07

Goliad wells show high levels of radon, radium

Victoria Advocate, 02/04/07

<http://www.thevictoriaadvocate.com/632/story/23489.html>

BY SONNY LONG - VICTORIA ADVOCATE

GOLIAD - Three water wells down the slope from a uranium mining exploratory area show levels of elements that far exceed Environmental Protection Agency standards for drinking water, according to reports released by the Goliad Groundwater Conservation District on Jan. 22.

The wells, on property off Farm-to-Market Road 1961, show elevated levels of radon-222, radium-226 and gross alpha. The EPA defines gross alpha as "the total radioactivity due to alpha particle emission."

One of the wells is "several hundred yards" from where uranium mining exploratory wells have been drilled and the others are nearby, said Art Dohmann, groundwater district president.

"We are not drawing any conclusions from this data about the how or why, but it is statistically obvious that the wells far exceed EPA standards," said Dohmann. "We look at this information in terms of concern for human consumption. All three wells were being used for human drinking water, and some for livestock. The owners were all notified, and we recommended they quit using the water."

Dohmann said the groundwater district is working with the state on arranging tests for

detecting airborne radon at the three sites.

"We are not the experts on this," said Dohmann. "We are seeking additional expert advise in this field to take this data and tell us what may be happening."

Another well, the Jacobs well also near the uranium exploratory area, earlier tested high for radium-226 with a reading of 10, twice as much as the EPA standard of 5. The owner had requested a permit from the groundwater district to provide water to the uranium mining company, but the board denied the request.

The uranium mining company is required to test water wells near the exploration area to establish a baseline of water readings. Uranium Energy Corporation has been drilling test wells in the Weser and Ander area of Goliad County since mid-May and has confirmed the presence of uranium. The company has leased about 2,000 acres in the area about two miles from the DeWitt County line.

ONE COUPLE'S REACTION

The water well of Roman and June Bethke tested 17,200 pCi/L for radon-222 compared to the EPA standard of 300-4000, and 96.2 pCi/L for radium-226 with an EPA standard of 5.

June has been drinking water from the 190-foot well in her front yard since it was drilled in "the late 1970s." Roman, who has lived there 25 years, says he isn't concerned with the well tests results.

"I was born and raised two miles down the road. I've lived around here all my life," said Roman. "I don't know what radon is or radium, other than a gas. But I'm 65 years old, and if I die from radon poisoning right now, I've had wonderful life."

The Bethkes have not had their house tested for airborne radon.

Two children grew up in the house and both showed grand champion and reserve champion livestock raised on the property, included steers and chickens.

"The cows drank it; the horses drank it. ... What does it do to you?" asked Roman. "Nobody knows. Nobody can tell us."

Roman pointed to a hill several hundred yards away from where he sat with June sipping iced tea under the carport.

"They were drilling right on that hill," he said. "I could care less about their uranium."

June said their water well was tested when it was drilled and tested high in sulphur. The current tests do not show high levels of sulphur.

"We aerate the water before we use it in the house," said June. "So the sulphur smell is gone."

Asked if the state health department came in and told them their home was unsafe, would they leave?

Roman said, "I'm not scared of this water. The good Lord is going take care of me."

"No," agreed June. "We're not going anywhere."

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